

Sermons 2008

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Chapter 1. Timeless Truths

READ - *Deuteronomy 11:1-12*

TEXT - *But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. (Deuteronomy 11:11-12 NIV)*

THEME - Thoughts for the new year.

Introduction

In this passage, the children of Israel were coming to the end of an era (discuss 40 years wandering in wilderness, death of an entire generation), and were looking forward with great anticipation to the dawn of a new era in a new land.

So we, today, stand at the end of 2008, and anticipate the beginning of 2009. It is a good time for reflecting on the past. It is also a time when we can't help wondering about the future.

What will 2009 bring? We have a new president who has vowed to take this country in a completely different direction. What will that mean? The middle east is more of a hot bed right now than ever. Israel and Hamas are, as we speak this morning, in the midst of full scale war. Iran is on the brink of having nuclear weapons and has sworn to destroy Israel the moment they are able to. Some in intelligence circles have stated that Iran would be able to do just that in late 2008 or early 2009. What will 2009 bring?

Well, I believe that the words Moses spoke to the children of Israel as they stood poised to cross into the promised land are just as relevant to us in America today, as we peer through the binoculars of hope into the new year before us. For there are certain truths that remain truth in any time and place.

Let's notice a couple of these truths:

In any time and place, the Christian will find that God sees and knows.

... the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. (Deuteronomy 11:11-12 NIV)

The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. (Psalm 33:13 KJV)

1. God sees and knows what you do.

ILLUS. Nathaniel - READ: *John 1:44-51*

ILLUS. Zaccheus - *And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. (Luke 19:5 KJV)*

a. There is a sobering aspect to this thought.

- When we're tempted to do things we ought not, God sees and knows.
- Even when we can lie our way out before men, God still sees and knows.

Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. (1 Sam 2:3 KJV)

O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee. (Psa 69:5 KJV)

The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. (Psa 11:4 KJV)

b. There is an encouraging aspect to this thought, as well.

- God sees your efforts that nobody else sees.

Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: (Jeremiah 32:19 KJV)

- God sees the things you do that you no longer feel like doing.
- God sees the things you do that you receive no thanks for.
- God sees when others mistreat you.

Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. (Exodus 3:9 KJV)

And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down. (2 Samuel 22:28 KJV)

2. God sees and knows what you need.

...your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. (Matthew 6:8 KJV)

ILLUS. Impotent man at pool of Bethesda - *When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? (John 5:6 KJV)*

3. God sees and knows what you are thinking.

Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. (Psalm 139:2 KJV)

And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. (1 Corinthians 3:20 KJV)

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5 KJV)

4. God sees and knows EVERYTHING!

ILLUS. I saw an advertisement for a bumper sticker that carried the message "God sees Everything." The words were beneath two of the omnipresent Christian fish symbols, which had been modified slightly to look like eyes. I want one. What a great reminder that God sees and knows EVERYTHING!

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139:16 KJV)

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. (2 Chronicles 16:9 KJV)

It makes a difference, doesn't it, to know that God sees?

ILLUS. Bob Richards, the former pole-vault champion, shares a moving story about a skinny young boy who loved football with all his heart.

Practice after practice, he eagerly gave everything he had. But being half the size of the other boys, he got absolutely nowhere. At all the games, this hopeful athlete sat on the bench and hardly ever played. This teenager lived alone with his father, and the two of them

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had a very special relationship. Even though the son was always on the bench, his father was always in the stands cheering. He never missed a game.

It was this way in grade school, in high school, and even in college: he never missed a practice and he never got to play because he was smaller than every other member on the team. He was kept on simply because he was an inspiration to the other members of the team.

At the end of his senior football season as he trotted onto the practice field shortly before the big playoff game, the coach met him with a telegram. The young man read the telegram and he became deathly silent. Swallowing hard, he mumbled to the coach, "My father died this morning. Is it all right if I miss practice today?" The coach put his arm gently around his shoulder and said, "Take the rest of the week off, son. And don't even plan to come back to the game on Saturday."

Saturday arrived, and the game was not going well. In the third quarter, when the team was ten points behind, a silent young man quietly slipped into the empty locker room and put on his football gear. As he ran onto the sidelines, the coach and his players were astounded to see their faithful teammate back so soon.

"Coach, please let me play. I've just got to play today." said the young man. The coach pretended not to hear him. There was no way he wanted his worst player in this close playoff game.

But the young man persisted, and finally feeling sorry for the kid, the coach gave in. "All right," he said. "You can go in."

Before long, the coach, the players and everyone in the stands could not believe their eyes. This little unknown, who had never played before was doing everything right. The opposing team could not stop him. He ran, he passed, blocked and tackled like a star. His team began to triumph.

The score was soon tied. In the closing seconds of the game, this kid intercepted a pass and ran all the way for the winning touchdown. The fans broke loose. His teammates hoisted him onto their shoulders. Such cheering you never heard!

Finally, after the stands had emptied and the team had showered and left the locker room, the coach noticed that the young man was sitting quietly in the corner all alone. The coach came to him and said, "Kid, I can't believe it. You were fantastic! Tell me what got into you? How did you do it?"

He looked at the coach, with tears in his eyes, and said, "Well, you knew my dad died, but did you know that my dad was blind?" The young man swallowed hard and forced a smile, "Dad came to all my games, but today was the first time he could see me play, and I wanted to show him I could do it!"

In the coming year, you'll hold up better... you'll play harder... you'll stay truer... if you just remember that in any time and place, the Christian will find that God sees... God knows.

In any time and place, the Christian will encounter hills and valleys.

But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys... (Deuteronomy 11:11 NIV)

As we look into the new year, we can rest assured that our lives will not be trouble free! (Joy!)

- The sea will not always be smooth.
- The journey will not always be downhill.
- The road will not always be straight and bathed in light.
- Sometimes we will find ourselves in the dark, struggling with hills and through valleys.

1. They might not always be pleasant, but I don't want to live without the hills.

Some words that come to mind to describe a world without hills and valleys: Flat, bleak, barren, plain, unsurprising, same, boring, uninspiring, ugly

We need the hills - for the challenge... to force us to our knees... to teach us we can climb... to remind us of the beauty of God.

ILLUS. I had a good friend named Charlie Sprouse. Charlie was retired and had a winter home in Florida, but every spring he would return to Southern Ohio to his home in a little "holler" in the town of Ohio Furnace. I asked him once why he would leave sunny Florida and come back to Ohio every year, even when his health was not too good and the drive was getting harder and harder. He responded, "I could never live without these hills."

We can choose to wish for the dullness of the plain, or we can embrace the hills.

ILLUS. Caleb - READ: Joshua 14:10-12

2. The fact is, like it or not, life is filled with ups and down, hills and valleys, troubles and trials, difficulties and traumas.

JOKE:

Doctor to patient: "I have bad news and worse news."

Patient: "So let's have it."

Doctor: "The bad news is that you only have 24 hours to live."

Patient: "I can't imagine what could be worse than that!"

Doctor: "I forgot to tell you yesterday."

But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys... (Deuteronomy 11:11 NIV)

ILLUS. Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over.

The problems began when Chippie's owner decided to clean Chippie's cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up. She'd barely said "hello" when "ssssopp!" Chippie got sucked in.

The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum, and opened the bag. There was Chippie -- still alive, but stunned.

Since the bird was covered with dust and soot, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and held Chippie under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do... she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air.

Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

A few days after the trauma, the reporter who'd initially written about the event contacted Chippie's owner to see how the bird was recovering. "Well," she replied, "Chippie doesn't sing much anymore -- he just sits and stares."

It's hard not to see why. Sucked in, washed up, and blown over... That's enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart. (In the Eye of the Storm by Max Lucado, Word Publishing, 1991, Page 11)

There will be times during 2009 when you and I will feel like Chippie the parakeet!

The God cares for you... and along with the hills and valleys He leads you through He always provides the grace... the strength... to get over the mountain or through the valley. The unbeliever has no such resource... you and I do. Praise God.

But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys... (Deuteronomy 11:11 NIV)

3. But the Bible says that life would be lessened without the hills and valleys!

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; (James 1:2)

QUOTE: "To realize the worth of the anchor, we need to feel the storm."

Can you thank God for the hills and valleys... for the troubles that come your way? Whether we understand it or not, the Bible does teach that they are for our good.

Conclusion

What will 2009 bring?

I don't know.

But I do know that no matter what comes... no matter the hills God asks us to climb, or the valleys He sends us through... He sees... God knows... and we can take great comfort and encouragement in that.

And so, no matter what comes, let's determine to trust God!

ILLUS. Vance Havner told a story about an elderly lady who was greatly disturbed by her many troubles--both real and imaginary. Finally, someone in her family tactfully told her, "Grandma, we've done all we can for you. You'll just have to trust God for the rest." A look of absolute despair spread over her face as she replied, "Oh dear, has it come to that?" Havner commented, "It always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that!"

1. This new year, let us not fear the hills and valleys, but determine to climb them and see what God has for us at the top.
2. This new year, let us not complain about our problems, but learn from them.
3. This new year, let us trust God no matter what comes our way, knowing that He has only our good in mind.
4. This new year, let us be reminded that it matters to Him about us; that He works all things together for our good; that He will never lead us to a place where His grace is insufficient to sustain us.

POEM: Lord, I've never moved a mountain and I guess I never will. All the faith that I could muster wouldn't move a small ant hill. Yet I'll tell you, Lord, I'm grateful for the joy of knowing Thee, and for all

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the mountain moving down through life You've done for me.

When I needed some help you lifted me from the depths of great despair. And when burdens, pain and sorrow have been more than I can bear, you have always been my courage to restore life's troubled sea, and to move these little mountains that have looked so big to me.

Many times when I've had problems and when bills I've had to pay, and the worries and the heartaches just kept mounting every day, Lord, I don't know how you did it. Can't explain the wheres or whys. All I know, I've seen these mountains turn to blessings in disguise.

No, I've never moved a mountain, for my faith is far too small. Yet, I thank you, Lord of Heaven, you have always heard my call. And as long as there are mountains in my life, I'll have no fear, for the mountain-moving Jesus is my strength and always near. (Author Unknown)

Invitation